

Sen. Jacque: Joint Finance unanimously approves volunteer firefighter grant program

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Jacque bill would provide stipend to cover training costs

MADISON, WI...Bipartisan legislation authored by Senator André Jacque (New Franken) to help volunteer firefighters pay their education and training expenses unanimously passed the Joint Committee on Finance today on a 16-0 vote.

Volunteer firefighters are integral to protecting the health and safety of Wisconsin residents, with around 92 percent of Wisconsin fire departments being volunteer or mostly volunteer. Unfortunately, these departments have witnessed declining membership for decades. Volunteers give their time to serve our communities, but currently must pay the cost of their own training.

“Most of us don’t realize that the volunteers who dedicate their time to serving their neighbors are also expected to pay for their own education and training, disincentivizing those who are willing to perform this critical lifesaving work,” Sen. Jacque said.

In an attempt to boost retention and recruitment, [Assembly Bill 187](#) provides a stipend to cover training costs for these selfless public servants. Municipalities may through ordinance provide a \$250 stipend to cover training costs for volunteer firefighters, which would trigger a 100 percent match by the Wisconsin Department of Administration of up to \$250. Individual firefighters could receive compensation totaling \$500 through this state and local partnership.

“Declining recruitment can mean longer response times in rural communities that

rely upon volunteer firefighters,” said Jacque. “This legislation is a first step toward ensuring that Wisconsin citizens do not face greater risk in emergency situations based on where they live.”

This legislation has the support of statewide firefighter and local government advocacy groups, such as the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association, the Wisconsin State Firefighter’s Association, the League of Wisconsin Municipalities and the Wisconsin Towns Association.

AB 187 unanimously passed the Assembly last June, and passed the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government on a 5-0 vote. The bill must now pass the full Senate before moving to the governor’s desk.

Senator André Jacque represents Northeast Wisconsin’s First Senate District, consisting of Door and Kewaunee Counties and portions of Brown, Calumet, Manitowoc, and Outagamie counties.